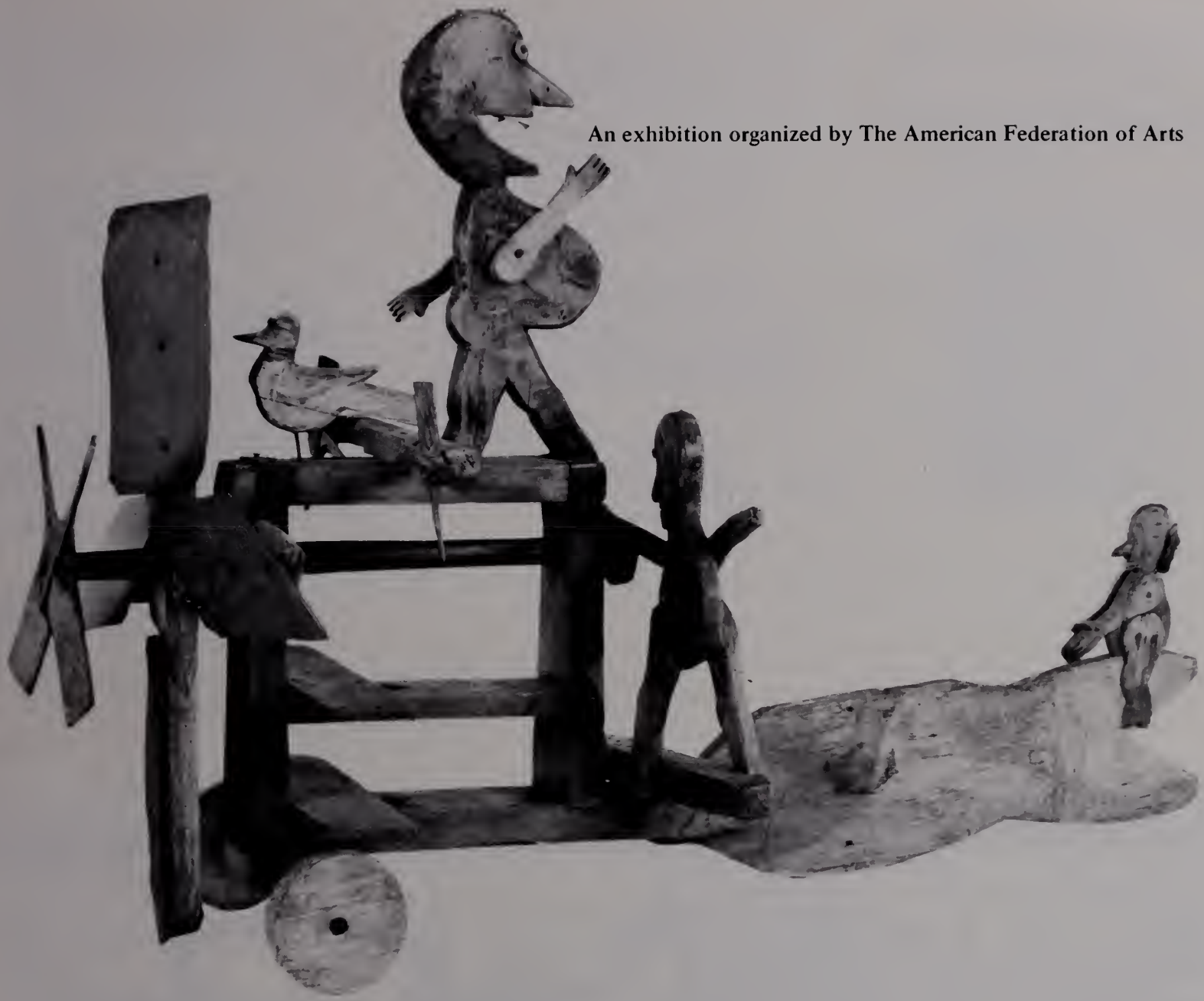
An exhibition organized by The American Federation of Arts



WEATHERVANES CARVINGS & QUILTS

from The Chase Manhattan Bank Art Collection

Catalog

WEATHERVANES

During the last half of the 19th century an American could, through various catalogs, order mass-produced weathervanes depicting animals which he raised, hunted or admired. While the vane functioned as a weather indicator, it also provided a striking silhouette which often reflected the preoccupation of its user.

1. HORSE AND SULKY WEATHERVANE
   c. 1880, mixed metals
   27 1/2 x 34 1/2 x 12 1/2"

2. HOSECART WEATHERVANE
   c. 1880, gilded copper
   23 1/2 x 54 1/2 x 10 1/4"

3. HORSE WEATHERVANE (BLACK HAWK)
   c. 1870, probably Fiske and Co.,
   copper painted red
   22 x 32 1/2 x 3"

4. FORMAL HORSE WEATHERVANE
   c. 1860, cast iron
   27 1/2 x 38 x 5 1/2"

5. MERINO RAM WEATHERVANE
   c. 1880, probably Fiske and Co.,
   copper and lead
   24 3/4 x 28 1/2 x 5 3/4"

6. MERINO EWE WEATHERVANE
   19th century, probably Fiske and Co.,
   copper and lead
   20 1/2 x 30 x 3 3/4"

7. ROOSTER WEATHERVANE
   c. 1870, copper painted red
   28 x 28 3/4 x 4 1/2"

8. PEAFOWL WEATHERVANE
   c. 1870, metal
   23 1/2 x 25 1/2 x 1 3/4"

9. RUNNING DEER WEATHERVANE
   c. 1880, probably Fiske and Co.,
   copper with traces of gilt
   22 x 32 1/4 x 5 1/2"

10. HOG WEATHERVANE
    1880, copper
    20 1/2 x 35 1/2 x 4"

CARVINGS

Ship-carving became an important trade in the early part of the 19th century reflecting the growing American shipping industry. Master carvers who clustered on the East Coast for employment often portrayed allegorical female figures in the neoclassical style.

11. SHIP'S FIGUREHEAD
    c. 1800, found in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, carved pine with traces of original paint
    96" high

Closely related to earlier styles of commercial carving, carousel carving occupied many former ship-carvers whose services were no longer needed by the end of the 19th century. The goat is a rare figure amoung carousel animals.

12. LEAPING GOAT CAROUSEL FIGURE
    c. 1880, carved by the Philadelphia Toboggan Company, Germantown, Pennsylvania, pine with polychrome decoration
    52 x 63 x 12 1/2"

Eagles were the most common patriotic symbol in American wood carving. Used as architectural embellishments, ship adornments and garden figures, they are found in a variety of moods and attitudes.

13. CARVED EAGLE
    19th century, spruce
    49 x 18 x 12"

14. CARVED AND GILDED EAGLE
    c. 1810-20, pine
    29 x 23 1/2 x 16"

Often called "sabbath toys" or "wind toys," whirligigs have at least one moveable part which is activated by the wind. The more complicated whirligigs have a pinwheel which is geared to set in motion human or animal figures performing various tasks.

15. WHIRLIGIG
    early 20th century, wood
    20 1/4 x 29 1/2 x 15 1/2"

Decoys were used to lure birds within range of the hunter's gun. Because of their function, they were made to look as natural as possible.

16. CURLEW SHOREBIRD DECOY
    early 20th century, by Harry V. Shourdes, painted wood
    5 3/4 x 12 1/4 x 3"

17. CURLEW SHOREBIRD DECOY
    early 20th century, painted wood
    5 3/4 x 12 1/4 x 3 1/2"

18. FEMALE RED BREASTED MERGANSER DUCK DECOY
    c. 1910, painted wood and glass
    7 x 14 x 5 1/2"

19. GREAT BLUE HERON CONFIDENCE DECOY
    c. 1910, Cape May, New Jersey, painted wood and glass
    9 1/2 x 42 1/4 x 6 1/4"

QUILTS

Quilts represent the practical, social, fanciful and artistic efforts of the society which produced them. The enormous variety of dazzling geometric patterns, color and fabric combinations and quilting techniques results in products which, seen independently, belie the rugged existence of those who made them. Quilts must have been, as they are today, a delightful entertainment.

20. BOWTIE QUILT
    c. 1900, Ohio Amish, pieced wool
    79 x 79"

21. FEATHERED CACTUS QUILT
    c. 1880-85, probably Connecticut, cotton applique
    84 x 84"

22. LOG CABIN, LIGHT AND DARK QUILT
    c. 1885-95, Pennsylvania German, pieced cotton
    88 x 88"

23. BARS QUILT
    c. 1890-1900, Pennsylvania Amish, pieced wool
    75 x 71"

24. HANDS ALL AROUND QUILT
    1896, signed Sallie E. Delp, Ohio Mennonite, pieced cotton
    80 x 80"

25. STAR OF BETHLEHEM QUILT
    c. 1840, by Elizabeth E. Moseman, Portchester, New York, pieced cotton
    90 x 92"
    This quilt took first prize at the Bridgeport, Connecticut State Fair in 1849.

26. VARIABLE STAR QUILT
    c. 1890, Pennsylvania, pieced cotton
    70 x 74"

27. STAR EVERLASTING QUILT
    c. 1845, Maine, pieced cotton
    87 x 81"

28. SCHOOLHOUSE QUILT
    c. 1885-95, Ohio, pieced cotton
    88 x 70"

29. WINDMILL QUILT
    c. 1840, Maine, pieced cotton
    79 x 84"

30. JOSEPH COAT OR RAINBOW QUILT
    c. 1890-95, Pennsylvania, pieced cotton
    82 x 83"

31. CROSSROADS CRIB QUILT
    c. 1900, Pennsylvania, pieced cotton
    38 1/2 x 38 1/2"

32. BARN RAISING CRIB QUILT
    c. 1885, Pennsylvania, pieced cotton
    40 x 40"

33. CALIFORNIA ROSE AND VINE CRIB QUILT
    c. 1850-55, Pennsylvania, cotton applique
    44 x 42"

WEATHERVANES CARVINGS & QUILTS

The American folk art objects in this exhibition are both functional and decorative. They were made and used by people in everyday life. It is intended that these examples will be viewed individually for what they are – weathervanes, carvings and quilts – which were made for the benefit of those who used them by artists and craftsmen capable of creating works of great visual interest.

Chronologically, the exhibition begins with a large ship's figurehead carved in a style which derives from the neoclassical tradition. Carvers, such as the anonymous sculptor who made this figurehead, later became increasingly engaged with forms more directly related to the spirit, pastimes and occupations of a developing nation. These new forms, which emerged as symbols of America, are represented here by two very different examples of the American eagle. Also, included are several bird decoys (representing a popular and continuing trend in American carving), an unusual carousel figure in the form of a leaping goat and an exceptional whirligig.

Early techniques of mass production are reflected here in ten weathervanes, all made in the last quarter of the 19th century. While these were inspired by earlier unique examples, it soon became possible to manufacture them in large numbers so that anyone could order the animal form or shape which best expressed his occupation or interest.

In addition, there are fourteen quilts from the mid- and late-19th century showing a wide variety of patterns, techniques and regional concerns. They too were functional and their abstract qualities have long been admired by artists and collectors.

The utility of these objects, along with their casual presence in daily life, made them an important part of the American aesthetic fabric. Where they once reflected a way of life, they now influence a way of looking.

Mary Lanier
Curator
The Chase Manhattan Bank Collection

Whitney Museum 55 Water Street september 11- october 15

The Downtown Branch of the Whitney Museum of American Art, located in the Uris Building at 55 Water Street, and supported by the business community of lower Manhattan, is operated under the direction of David Hupert, Head of the Whitney Museum's Education Department.

The museum is open Monday through Friday 11 – 3. Admission is free.